

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A thermal fixing device comprising:
a fixing member disposed to be in contact with a fixation medium;
a pressuring member disposed to face the fixing member and configured to press the fixation medium against the fixing member;
a conveying unit configured to convey the fixation medium that has passed through between the fixing member and the pressuring member;
a peeling member configured to be in contact with the fixing member; and
a separating member configured to separate the peeling member from the fixing member in a state where the separating member is in contact with the fixation medium that has passed through between the fixing member and the pressuring member; and
a conveying path provided between the fixing member and the conveying unit, and a space existing between the peeling member and the fixing member when the fixation medium is being conveyed along the conveying path.
2. (Currently Amended) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the separating member is configured to be in contact with the fixation medium held between the conveying unit and both the fixing ~~member~~medium and the pressuring member with a given tensile force when the fixation medium is being conveyed along the conveying path.
3. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the peeling member and the separating member are separately formed.
4. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the peeling member and the separating member are integrally formed.

5. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the peeling member is urged toward the fixing member by weight thereof.

6. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the peeling member is swingably provided.

7. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the separating member comprises a contacting portion that contacts the fixation medium and is formed by a curved surface.

8. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the peeling member comprises a guiding portion configured to guide the fixation medium that has passed through between the fixing member and the pressuring member to the conveying unit.

9. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the peeling member comprises a tip portion configured to be in contact with the fixing member, and

wherein a width of the tip portion in a longitudinal direction of the fixing member is configured to be within a range of from 0.5 mm to 1.5 mm.

10. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the peeling member comprises a tip portion configured to be in contact with the fixing member, and being formed substantially in wedge shape having a first surface facing the fixing member and a second surface disposed opposite to the fixing member with regard to the first surface,

wherein a first angle between a tangential line at a contacting point where the tip portion contacts the fixing member and the first surface is configured to be within a range of from 0° to 45°,

wherein a second angle between a normal line at the contacting point and the second surface is configured to be not smaller than 15°, and

wherein a third angle between the first and the second surface is configured to be not smaller than 10° .

11. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the peeling member is urged toward the fixing member by a force not larger than $0.005 \times 9.8 \text{ N}$.

12. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the pressuring member comprises a plurality of pressuring members.

13. (Original) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the conveying unit is configured to convey the fixation medium at a speed not slower than a speed of conveyance of the fixation medium by the pressuring member and the fixing member.

14. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:
a sheet feeding section configured to feed a sheet; and
an image forming section configured to form an image on the sheet fed by the sheet feeding section,

wherein the image forming section includes a thermal fixing device comprising:

a fixing member disposed to be in contact with the sheet;
a pressuring member disposed to face the fixing member and configured to press the sheet against the fixing member;

a conveying unit configured to convey the sheet that has passed through between the fixing member and the pressuring member;

a peeling member configured to be in contact with the fixing member; and
a separating member configured to separate the peeling member from the fixing member in a state where the separating member is in contact with the sheet that has passed through between the fixing member and the pressuring member; and

a conveying path provided between the fixing member and the conveying unit, and a space existing between the peeling member and the fixing member when the sheet is being conveyed along the conveying path.

15. (Currently Amended) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the separating member is configured to be in contact with the sheet held between the conveying unit and both the fixing ~~member~~medium and the pressuring member with a given tensile force when the sheet is being conveyed along the conveying path.

16. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the peeling member and the separating member are separately formed.

17. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the peeling member and the separating member are integrally formed.

18. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the peeling member is urged toward the fixing member by weight thereof.

19. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the peeling member is swingably provided.

20. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the separating member comprises a contacting portion that contacts the sheet contacts and is formed by a curved surface.

21. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the peeling member comprises a guiding portion configured to guide the sheet that has passed through between the fixing member and the pressuring member to the conveying unit.

22. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the peeling member comprises a tip portion configured to be in contact with the fixing member, and

wherein a width of the tip portion in a longitudinal direction of the fixing member is configured to be within a range of from 0.5 mm to 1.5 mm.

23. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the peeling member comprises a tip portion configured to be in contact with the fixing member, and being formed substantially in wedge shape having a first surface facing the fixing member and a second surface disposed opposite to the fixing member with regard to the first surface,

wherein a first angle between a tangential line at a contacting point where the tip portion contacts the fixing member and the first surface is configured to be within a range of from 0° to 45° ,

wherein a second angle between a normal line at the contacting point and the second surface is configured to be not smaller than 15° , and

wherein a third angle between the first and the second surface is configured to be not smaller than 10° .

24. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the peeling member is urged toward the fixing member by a force not larger than $0.005 \times 9.8 \text{ N}$.

25. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the pressuring member comprises a plurality of pressuring members.

26. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the conveying unit is configured to convey the sheet at a speed not slower than a speed of conveyance of the sheet by the pressuring member and the fixing member.

27. (New) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the separating member protrudes into the conveying path when the fixation medium is not being conveyed.

28. (New) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the separating member protrudes into the conveying path when the sheet is not being conveyed.

29. (New) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the separating member protrudes into the conveying path when the peeling member is in contact with the fixing member.

30. (New) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the separating member protrudes into the conveying path when the peeling member is in contact with the fixing member.

31. (New) The thermal fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein when the fixation medium is being conveyed along the conveying path, the fixation medium is in contact with the fixing member and the conveying unit, and the fixation medium is one of substantially extended or completely extended along the conveying path.

32. (New) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein when the sheet is being conveyed along the conveying path, the sheet is in contact with the fixing member and the conveying unit, and the sheet is one of substantially extended or completely extended along the conveying path.

33. (New) A thermal fixing device comprising:

- a fixing member disposed to be in contact with a fixation medium;
- a pressuring member disposed to face the fixing member and configured to press the fixation medium against the fixing member;
- a conveying unit configured to convey the fixation medium that has passed through between the fixing member and the pressuring member;
- a peeling member configured to be in contact with the fixing member; and
- a separating member that protrudes into a conveying path when the peeling member is in contact with the fixing member,

the fixation medium pushing the separating member away from the conveying path and separating the peeling member from the fixing member when the fixation medium is

in contact with the separating member, the fixing member and the conveying unit, and the fixation medium is at least one of substantially extended or completely extended along the conveying path.